



**Minutes of Meeting**  
**CITIZENS' EFFICIENCY COMMISSION**  
**September 14, 2016**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Citizens' Efficiency Commissioners**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Larry Bomke	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackie Newman
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Josh Collins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Robert Plunk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kevin Dorsey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	J.D. Sudeth
<input type="checkbox"/>	Karen Hasara	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Wesley
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mike Murphy		

**Others**

Ed Taft – Williamsville  
Marty Fairchild - Rochester  
Norm Sims – SSCRPC  
Molly Berns – SSCRPC  
Gail Weiskopf – SSCRPC

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Mike Murphy called the meeting of the Citizens' Efficiency Commission to order.

**II. ROLL CALL AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCES**

Chair Mike Murphy stated Hon. Karen Hasara telephoned him and will not be in attendance. Chair Mike Murphy stated he was just informed that Mr. Wesley would not be in attendance because he recently had fallen and is on bed-rest. Ms. Molly Berns stated Sen. Larry Bomke had emailed that he would not be in attendance.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Murphy asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the August 3, 2016, regular meeting. Mr. J.D. Sudeth moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Josh Collins seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

**IV. INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Murphy asked Mr. Robert Plunk to introduce the guests. Plunk stated they were from the newly formed Sangamon County Fire District Trustees Association. Mr. Ed Taft the President of the Williamsville Fire Protection District and the President of the new Sangamon County Fire District Trustees Association, and Mr. Marty Fairchild who is a trustee on the Rochester Fire Protection District and the Vice-President of the new Sangamon County Fire District Trustees Association. Plunk stated the new Sangamon County Association held its second meeting, Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. He said he appreciated them coming.

**V. REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Chair Murphy reported for those who were not at the last County Board meeting where the CEC presented the four proposed non-binding referendums that the County Board requested, the County Board has the opportunity to have up to three referendums on the ballot and they had asked the CEC to come up with three because they did not have anything on their agenda. Two of the referendums were approved and will be on the ballot in November. The following were the four proposed non-binding referendums that were presented at the County Board:



1. Shall the office of township collector be abolished in Sangamon County with the duties to be assumed by the County Treasurer?
2. Shall the fire protection districts in Sangamon County organize regionally in order to improve response times?
3. Shall all fire protection district trustees be elected rather than appointed by the County Board?
4. Shall the Sangamon County Board support with existing funds the further development of the Regional Leadership Council, a coalition of mayors and village presidents representing each of the municipalities in Sangamon County, so that the Council can develop cooperative programs, such as joint purchasing, that will improve local government efficiency?

Chair Murphy stated that the two approved referendums were Number 1 and Number 4. Chair Murphy stated both of the referendums about the fire protection districts failed. He stated that it personally was a disappointment that neither one was approved for the ballot. Chair Murphy said he felt there was justification for both of them. The CEC did present the facts and the CEC did not speculate anything that did not have solid verification, and the CEC was honest and forth-right in its position. Chair Murphy thanked Mr. Wesley for his good presentation.

Chair Murphy asked if Mr. Plunk or Mr. Sudeth had anything to add. Mr. Sudeth declined any comments. Mr. Plunk stated the opposition came very prepared. They showed solidarity between the fire chiefs and the trustees. Chair Murphy agreed and hoped some of the comments made that night they find to be true in the future. They have an opportunity to live up to some of those comments and he hopes they do.

## **VI. REPORT OF STATUS OF PROPOSED REFERENDUMS AND DISCUSSION**

Chair Murphy asked for discussion of the two referendums that will be on the ballot. He stated Hon. Karen Hasara and he had spoke briefly about it and agreed they would need to be available to any press that would request someone to speak. Also he stated that if the members of the CEC belong to any civic groups that someone could speak with the group and educate them on the two referendums and why the CEC feels that they are important. Mr. Plunk stated that Hon. Hasara had reported last month that some of the former members of the first CEC have volunteered to provide assistance. Mr. Plunk explained some of those individuals actually worked on the recommendation related to the township collector abolishment. Mr. Plunk explained the Regional Leadership Council was formed from the Peer Network recommendation that the Community Development group worked on. Chair Murphy noted he doesn't expect much opposition on the tax collectors, he feels the CEC can get the message out.

Chair Murphy stated one County Board member thought the collectors should remain for no other reason by to have a "minor league to develop politicians". Chair Murphy doesn't see a need for any more politicians in Sangamon County and thought this was quite humorous. Mr. Collins stated there is a pretty vast minor league now.

Chair Murphy stated there will be just one more meeting before the election. He noted he has spoken with Midwest Family Radio Station (WMAY/WNNS/WQLZ/WUSW). They have agreed to have the CEC on a couple of their talk radio shows. Chair Murphy stated others have contacted him about being on their network since they heard him on "The Jim Leach Show" (94.7 & 97.0 WMAY). Chair Murphy stated the radio will be pretty easy to utilize. He asked what the thoughts



were on the newspaper? Mr. Sims suggested talking with the editorial board. Mr. Sims said that the question here is the CEC going to wait for someone to call you to be on it, or is the CEC going to actively pursue them, in particular the civic clubs which in some ways is a wider audience than the radio? Chair Murphy stated that the three radios he has good relationships with and the CEC will be on all three. Sam Madonia (Sport Radio 1450 WFMB AM), "The Jim Leach Show", Mike & Molson, and/or Greg Bishop (94.7 & 970 WMAY), and Joey McLaughlin (1240 AM 107.5 FM WTAX). Chair Murphy expressed the need to contact the State Journal-Register. Mr. Plunk stated that the Illinois Times is a good resource as well as South County Publications. Chair Murphy stated he would contact Joe Michelich, Publisher of South County Publications to see what the CEC can get done there. Mr. Collins stated the writer for Illinois Times is Patrick Yeagle. Mr. Plunk said he was from the small town of Farmers City. Chair Murphy stated he would coordinate this with Sen. Bomke and Hon. Hasara. Mr. Sims suggested contacting Springfield Business Journal as well. Mr. Sims said Michelle (Higginbotham) Ownbey or Fletcher Farrar would be good contacts there. Mr. Sudeth stated he sees Fletcher Farrar almost every day. Chair Murphy asked Mr. Sudeth to coordinate something with Mr. Farrar and inform Sen. Bomke and Hon. Hasara so they will know.

Ms. Berns noted that the November CEC meeting will be November 9, which is the day after the election and also the afternoon of County Board. Chair Murphy stated that since there is only one meeting so the CEC needs to follow up and get it rolling. Chair Murphy stated at the Chamber of Commerce allows members to talk about anything, so he plans on presenting this at the next meeting. Mr. Plunk handed out a one-page document with advisory referenda questions.

Mr. Sims stated that there are only two counties in Illinois doing it and one of those doesn't even know why they are doing it. Neither one has a hundred percent participation of township collectors. What do a hundred counties know that we don't know? Since the CEC has started this at least one county has drop it and has had no problems. It won't cost anymore and actually the service will be better.

Chair Murphy said he was excited to talk about Regional Leadership Council to educate people that there is such a thing. This will be a positive so the people can help get their leaders involved. Ms. Berns stated that the members that attend the meetings are together in a group and the group dynamic has allowed there to be some joint procurements and joint efforts that have met efficiencies within the communities. Having it meet on a quarterly basis to get together and talk about how they can share information and share resources is beneficial to everyone in the county.

Chair Murphy stated that he was shocked in 2011 when he first joined the CEC when the CEC started interviewing these different tax people in different entities and how little communication there was between them. He is still befuddled that the Transportation Director for District 186 now meets with the Director of Springfield Mass Transit District.

Mr. Sims stated that eight years ago when the CEC started on the Sangamon Regional Strategic Plan they brought all the municipal leaders together to talk about what they were going to do. That was the first time some of them ever met one another. Chair Murphy explained they have such common interests. He asked them wouldn't it be beneficial to find out where he is buying gas from? Chair Murphy said he talks with other restaurant owners; he said they are always smarter than him, but by doing that they both benefit from each other's knowledge from experiences. Mr. Sims stated SATS found out that Rochester was paying \$40 for a stop sign; the City of Springfield was making them for \$10. The question was why doesn't the City make them and sell them to Rochester for \$20? Mr. Sims noted we need to see more of this occur.

Chair Murphy said one good thing about getting the fire districts fired up was that the Sangamon County Fire District Trustees Association was formed. Mr. Sims stated there are two parts to this question: 1) highlight this group exists and they should get together; and 2) they need support from the County Board to continue and keep them working, fruitfully because absent of staff involvement it just doesn't happen. Chair Murphy said as a taxpayer he can see the return on investment is great. Put a little bit of money in on it and we will get so much more out and it will benefit everybody in the county. Mr. Sims stated that these entities are living on property tax dollars. But property tax dollars are going down demographically within five years because there will be an increase in property owners who can qualify for the over 65 homestead exemption by one third, and five years after that it doubles that amount. That is automatic, that is no matter what. We are already seeing this effect because as the baby boomers move out of the larger houses, there are not enough young people with enough money coming along to replace them at the current value of those houses. So there will be a decline in tax intake and a decline in property value because it will not sell for the same rate that it is valued at now. Chair Murphy stated that he thought they were in line on what they were going to present and to email Sen. Bomke and Hon. Hasara about what groups you will be talking with since they are the taskforce members. Ms. Berns asked to be included on the email so she can inform Mr. Andy Van Meter and Mr. McFadden.

## **VII. DISCUSSION OF TASKFORCE WORK PLANS**

### **A. Regional Leadership Council as Strategic Partner - Higher Ed Institutions as Strategic Partner – Robert Plunk & Jackie Newman**

Mr. Plunk noted that the next quarterly meeting for the RLC mayors will be Wednesday, October 26th, from 5:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. in the County Board Chamber.

### **B. Sewer Transfer Study – Dr. Kevin Dorsey & Chair Murphy**

Chair Murphy stated that the City of Springfield Council is talking about sewers again, after receiving 5 ½ inches of rain in two hours.

### **C. Developing Legislative Linkages - Hon. Karen Hasara & Sen. Larry Bomke**

No report given.

### **D. Developing Linkages with Townships - J.D. Sudeth & Chair Murphy**

No report given.

### **E. Developing Linkages with Fire/EMS – Robert Plunk & Robert Wesley**

Mr. Plunk stated the new Sangamon County Association held its second meeting, Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. There were nine trustees from fire protection districts in attendance. That is not a great number out of 26, but it was a good number. Those in attendance are as follows: New Berlin, Island Grove, Rochester, Williamsville, Sherman, Buffalo, Pleasant Plains, Riverton, and Dale Emerson from Curran which is one of the pass through districts. Chair Murphy noted that south county was not represented: Auburn, Divernon, Pawnee, Chatham, or Loami. Also Ms. Cheri Breneman of Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts was in attendance.

Mike Moos is the secretary for the new association. He works for the Village of Sherman, and is the secretary for Sherman Fire Protection District Trustees. Chatham had a trustees



meeting that night otherwise they would have attended. Chatham has been active and said they would be supportive. Mechanicsburg trustee, Mike Thompson was in the field harvesting but he is very interested. Mr. Taft stated that they are having trouble getting updated emails for all of the trustees.

Mr. Plunk stated he was impressed that they had a guest speaker for their second meeting, Retired Fire Chief John Myers from Chillicothe. He went into great detail about Caterpillar located in Mossville, IL. They had lost a lot of their people off of the line and how they made the engines for the fire trucks. His presentation was about an ACTIVE statewide SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire Emergency Response) grant to assist departments with recruitment and retention of volunteers. He was representing the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association.

Chair Murphy asked the guests if they were aware of the grant. Mr. Taft said he had heard about it last year. He said that they used them to help design brochures that they keep on their fire trucks. They have a new resident's brochure and they are going to get a banner, canopy, and they will help them with social media. They not only have an active Facebook page but they have advertised with Pandora where they can target the young people in specific areas, so they are looking to get a countywide effort. If someone is interest they can call a toll free number and they refer them to the closes department to where they live. Mr. Taft said it is a very easy federal grant just a page application to fill in and it is not very bureaucratic at all.

Mr. Sims stated that is a really good reason why this group has come together and also looking at the trends the Millennials are not volunteers which will affect particularly rural fire districts. We are seeing a decline in population in rural areas. Chair Murphy stated hopefully your new association would be a good way to put a grant request together for the whole entire county.

Mr. Plunk explained that the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association is administrating this grant. That is an accomplishment in itself because so many of the members of the association are fire chiefs of professional career departments. That is a plus that they are pursuing an issue like this. Mr. Taft stated he has several conversations with the training officer with the Springfield Fire Department, he is always happy that the IFCA is out there getting the volunteers and giving them the basic training because it makes it easier when they go for a career.

Mr. Plunk noted that on their agenda was trustee training. Ms. Breneman had quite a discussion about how there may be changes made to their curriculum and how they provide it. It was proposed to put some of the basic training information online so that the trustees would not have to spend so much time in a classroom all weekend.

**F. Create Network of Business Leaders - J.D. Sudeth & Josh Collins**

Mr. Collins report that Mr. Sudeth and he have scheduled Chair Murphy will be speaking at the next Illinois Commerce Commission Board meeting.

**G. Regional Policing Study – Hon. Karen Hasara & Sen. Larry Bomke**

No report given.



**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Next Meeting Date – October 12, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Taft thanked the commissioners for letting Mr. Marty Fairchild and him attend the meeting. Mr. Taft stated as they had said at the County Board meeting they are not opposed to districts consolidating but they do strongly believe it should be done by the people in the district. Mr. Taft stated he would be happy to work with the CEC to resolve any problems or issues, or try to work together to what is best for the county. Chair Murphy stated that so does the CEC and he feels like it was kind of misconstrued as to what the CEC was trying to accomplish. The CEC does not want to take it away from the people. The CEC wants to make it easier in some ways for them to be able to do something they might feel necessary to do in the future. Chair Murphy said honestly there feels like there is a hesitancy sometimes to discuss that because they don't want to give up their domain. Chair Murphy explained that sometimes it may be better for a group like us or some other group to be looking at it and help them make that decision. That might be necessarily needed. Chair Murphy explained sometimes it is hard to see the big picture.

Chair Murphy said he was excited when the association's attorney said that consolidation is on the agenda a lot. He thinks there needs to be some talking and long-term planning done; this isn't something that needs to be done tomorrow. The CEC thinks there is a need in the future.

Mr. Taft said that the first that he had heard of it was by reading it in the newspaper, so he felt a little caught off guard. Mr. Taft said he was not trying to imply that the CEC was hiding anything. Mr. Sudeth stated the CEC has been here for 5 years, every meeting has been open. Mr. Sims noted that the CEC met early on with the chiefs and some trustees one-on-one. He stated that the mayors attended the CEC meetings as well with some concerns came from the mayors. Chair Murphy explained that since he became chair about 3 months prior things have moved quickly. He and Hon. Hasara met with Mr. Van Meter to discuss what the CEC was going to do. At that time they ask the CEC to come up with non-binding referendums. Every election cycle they have 3 that can put on the ballot and they had nothing. So that explains had it moved so rapidly. It had to be presented last month for them to get it on the ballot. Mr. Taft said hopefully someone can be for future if you have any questions or issues the CEC wants to talk to them about. He said that the CEC is welcome to come to their meetings. The next meeting will be Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> in Rochester at the firehouse and they start 7:00 P.M. Ms. Berns stated that now that there is an association the CEC members will know who to call. Chair Murphy said instead of 27 fire districts. Mr. Sims reiterated the chiefs knew that it was going on, the chiefs had been here several times, and many a times saying that their problems were their trustees. Both trustees said they intend on being a little more visible at the chief's meetings and one of them stated when he attends the chief's meetings and he has often been made to feel that he is not very welcomed. Mr. Plunk stated that was a common feeling.

Mr. Collins said the chiefs came here August 13, 2014 and recommended that the trustees go through this training program. Mr. Taft stated the Illinois Association Fire Protection District holds an annual conference in Peoria. It is three or four days long. There is advanced trustee training that is three sessions that total twelve hours. They cover management, budgeting, finance and personal issues. A trustee that completes all twelve hours becomes certified. Every



year after being certified a trustee needs continuing education which offered in the spring throughout the state. Mr. Taft stated the association wants to offer the trustee training here in Springfield in January or February when everyone is available. There is a minimum of 25 people for the class to be held, so they would try to get trustees from Sangamon County and the surrounding counties to attend. Mr. Collins asked Mr. Taft if that was something he supported. If he thought the trustees should have training before being appointed. Mr. Taft stated no, he thinks that after they get appointed that it is a really good idea to have them take that training. He stated he did it this year and it was beneficial. He has been on the fire department for ten years as an officer part of the time and a trustee for a year or two before he did that. Mr. Collins clarified his question that he supports the idea of training, but not making it mandatory. Mr. Fairchild said that it is his personal opinion that you can't go into a volunteer organization and start telling people what to do or you won't have anyone there. On a personal aspect unlike Mr. Taft, I had 35 years of hands-on carrying a pager and answering calls, thumping on chests, prying people out of cars, and crawling around inside burning houses. He further stated that when he became a trustee in 2013 he felt like he knew everything he needed to know to do the job. Our trustees, since we are elected, they strongly encourage us to go through the trustee training. He stated that he did go through training it woke him up, and opened his eyes. A fire trustee, in his opinion, should take the training and should be given every opportunity to do so. Mr. Collins asked Mr. Fairchild if he thought it should be mandatory. He said, "No, he did not." Ms. Berns asked why not? Mr. Fairchild said because if you don't have anybody as a trustee, you don't have anybody to train, and then you don't have a trustee. Ms. Berns asked Mr. Fairchild, that if he says it is very beneficial then to name the top three things that come to your mind that you learned that was the most beneficial from your training? Mr. Fairchild replied finance, liability, personnel issues. Those are the three things that are addressed directly and thoroughly by the advanced trustee training.

Mr. Sims said he thinks they are in a very difficult situation in terms of the nature of the entity. It may be a voluntary entity but it is not like some book club. It is a governmental entity. You are either elected or you are appointed by a governmental body. There are certain powers including related to taxes as a governmental entity, but at the same time you have to volunteer and you have to have people to do it. That is part of the reason there is a question about some training to be required sometime during the life. Mr. Taft stated that someone once pointed out that they don't have a line of people knocking on their door to become a trustee. What he would suggest is that when people send in their letter to be appointed, to then send out a questionnaire asking if they would take this training. Mr. Sims asked Mr. Taft if he was indicating that we don't need to consolidate fire districts but may be consolidate fire commissions. Mr. Taft said, no. Mr. Sims asked about what in the future when you cannot get enough people what are you going to do. Mr. Taft said then it will be time to talk about consolidation in the district. Chair Murphy said the CEC is looking down the road and see that trend coming, not specifically with the trustees, but with volunteer fire departments. It is a definite trend that is coming. Mr. Taft stated they just expanded their trustees from three to five and they didn't have any trouble.

Berns stated that we are asking a lot of questions and certainly not trying to box you in, and that it is important to note that these are your personal opinions not necessarily those of your fire protection districts. But the three things you mentioned, Marty (Mr. Fairchild): budget, liability and personnel. If the Fire Protection District trustees go through training, how are those top three things that you got out of it beneficial to a pass through district that basically meets annually to approve a contract. Mr. Fairchild stated that you are asking me to comment on someone else's personal business. I will make a comment, but it's my personal opinion. Ms. Berns stated that the group understood completely. Mr. Fairchild stated that the pass through districts are in the unique position that they don't have trucks, they don't have people and they don't have buildings. We all understand that. That kind of makes me wonder, "how does this work?" Mr. Taft stated that the one thing they do have that they share with us is liability issues. The group agreed. Mr. Sudeth asked Mr. Taft, what was the one thing that he said had scared him to death (referring to the

training Mr. Taft attended). Mr. Taft stated that it was the responsibilities that they have; it's not just showing up once a month for a meeting. Mr. Sudeth asked, "how liable are you as Trustees for these guys going out?" Mr. Fairchild stated that they have an insurance company that takes care of that and they can't personally be sued but the district can be. Mr. Sudeth asked if the district was paying that insurance and Mr. Fairchild confirmed that to be the case. Mr. Sudeth asked, in general, what range is the cost of the insurance and is the cost uniform across trustee (districts) or is it based upon size. Mr. Taft stated that it is partly based on size because workers' comp is part of that cost.

Mr. Fairchild stated that they (Rochester Trustees) is carrying workers' comp on, and that's another thing that I'm struggling with personally as a trustee, because we have a core group of about 15 people that when the pager goes off, they are at the fire house. They are trained, they come to the meetings and we love them. It costs the same amount to put the workers' comp on them as it does for the guy who shows up once a year at the banquet (Mr. Taft added – or to get his new T-shirt), or wants to drive the truck in the Fourth of July parade and throw candy to the crowd – it costs the same amount. Mr. Fairchild stated that he struggles with that it causes problems in the community. Mr. Taft stated that his district has the same problems and for his district the insurance is about \$18,000. Mr. Sims asked if that covers any personnel issues that may come up in the firefighter group. Mr. Taft asked if he meant, if the district got sued by a volunteer or something like that? Mr. Taft was not sure if it does or not and thought it was a good question. Mr. Sudeth returned to the liability issue by stating that trustees cannot personally be sued but the district can. Mr. Taft stated that there are other things that people don't really think about. There are certain deadlines and if they don't get the information in on time, then they don't have a budget for the next year. There are other things like that that are eye-openers. Mr. Sims asked, for example, if you were sued for something like sexual harassment and the district lost, would your insurance cover that. Mr. Fairchild stated that "yes" insurance would cover that. They don't like it, but they would cover it. When stupid things happen and it isn't dealt with correctly within the department and it gets sued, then stupidity is painful and expensive. Mr. Sims confirmed that insurance does cover it. Mr. Fairchild stated that it does. Ms. Berns clarified that Mr. Fairchild could not personally speak to the issue, but could only speak to it from an organizational standpoint.

Mr. Sims stated that there may be some things that districts have exposures on that we (the CEC) may not have thought about. Mr. Taft stated that the other thing they have done is triple their training budget to make sure that everyone gets as much training as they can possibly handle. They are working more through the association, neighboring districts through mutual aid agreements to do mutual training with other fire departments.

Mr. Sims stated that he wanted to go back to insurance and wondered about the possibility of pooling the risk of the policies and putting them under one policy rather than multiple policies and if there would be savings. Mr. Taft stated that it was something they could talk about. Mr. Fairchild stated that he thinks, personally, that was something the trustees should discuss. Ms. Berns stated that maybe they needed to work out something on an "attendance policy", which is not the correct phrase, but work with the insurance company for those people who are half-time or quarter-time have a lower premium. Mr. Sims stated that he did not think an insurance company would consider that because an injury is an injury. Mr. Fairchild agreed because when the driver of a big red truck runs over somebody, you will be in court. Mr. Sudeth stated that they really don't care what truck you were driving if you were on your way to a call. Mr. Fairchild stated that if they could pool their insurance policies, the bigger the pool, the lower the premiums might be. Mr. Sims, if I am correct that if a firefighter is on his way to the station but in their private vehicle, they are covered by insurance? All agreed that it was from when the firefighter left home on their way to a call. Mr. Fairchild stated that situation is a public relations nightmare even if nobody gets hurt. If the public sees one of the guys, going hell bent to the firehouse with his blue light going, he



passes three people, throws gravel, then the Chief gets a phone call and the trustees get a phone call and you have somebody irate and you have to deal with them.

Mr. Sims stated to Chairman Murphy that he was bringing this up because he felt that these conversations need to continue to go on and we may find some areas for good suggestions that would help the trustees. Mr. Sims stated that this has provided some information about the exposures that we (the CEC) haven't even thought about. Then the questions becomes, "is there a better way and if we could bring a group together to help them?" Mr. Sudeth stated that he thinks there could be benefits from telling the new guys that come in as trustees that while it may not be mandatory, they need to take the training and get the education. He continued by stating that they (Mr. Taft and Mr. Fairchild) both stated that they had gotten their eyes opened after being "on the hose" for 20 or 30 years and now they are on the other side of the wall.

Chair Murphy stated that one thing he would hope from their group is that a common theme is that things are not going to be the same with funding and volunteers down the road. Things are going to change. I think we all agree with that and what's frustrating to us, for myself and this Commission, is that we get a lot of "well, that's how we've always done it." And that's not going to work. How we've always done it, and with the changing times, that is what is frustrating to us. We don't feel like there is an understanding that maybe we have to look at something different; maybe we have to try something different. I really hope that you guys getting together and talking about common problems, and you guys can solve them on your own. That's all we want. But we want you to have an open mind and understand that there is going to be some difficult choices down the road. With all the things we talk about, those are just inconveniences. You guys talk about things that affect people's lives. Mr. Taft asked the group that if they hear or see things, to let them know because it might be something that, like you said, they just don't see. If there is something they should talk about then let them know. He stated that we can contact him, Marty or whomever and they can bring it up.

Dr. Dorsey asked if anyone has any clue how much of a savings there could be on insurance. If liability is on a cost-per-head basis or number of trucks, or even what the other variables are to know if consolidation of some things or pooling would be better than staying apart. Mr. Taft stated that there has been talk in the past about pooling purchases and that's just about getting better communication about when it's time to buy something. At their trustee meeting they may make the decision when it's time to buy a new hose or something like that and pass the resolution to do it. Ms. Berns stated that as they heard earlier, some of the mayors have pooled some purchases and have found it to be helpful as a result of the RLC. Mr. Sims stated that originally that was part of the point of the RLC website, to be able to share when purchases were being made so communities to pool.

Mr. Collins asked who they use as an insurance company and if it was a local company. Mr. Taft stated that Williamsville uses a company that is independent agents based in Bloomington called VFIS. Mr. Fairchild stated that Rochester uses the same company and that they had just gone through reviewing all of their insurance coverages and it was a long, boring and dry process but an extraordinarily necessary conversation. There are five insurance companies in the USA that insurance volunteer fire protection districts. VFIS is one and they use them. Mr. Taft stated that Williamsville has used them as long as he has been involved and that there never been any problems with them in terms of if a claim has to be filed. Mr. Sudeth asked about the escalation of costs with those policies. Mr. Taft stated that there had not been very much increase. Mr. Sims stated that he was willing to bet that the actual payouts were not as much as people would think. Mr. Fairchild stated that they had a couple of personnel lawsuits that they had to settle. Mr. Sims stated that he would also bet that it's a fairly safe policy to write. Mr. Sudeth agreed. Mr. Taft stated that the only claims that they usually have is a workers' comp type of claim for someone who gets hurt or exposed to blood. Occasionally, they will have equipment that gets damaged like a hose that gets punctured and they will replace that. Chair Murphy asked if they pick up the

worker's salary from their regular job if they get hurt while on duty with the fire department. Mr. Taft stated that the insurance will pay what their regular salary is.

Mr. Collins asked if they could walk him through a personnel issue that might arise with a volunteer organization. Mr. Taft stated that there are certain standards that have to be met: number one is following HIPAA laws and privacy issues; driving recklessly to get to the fire house; and, then from the firehouse to the call. Mr. Collins asked if they had to settle personnel issues? Mr. Fairchild stated that they (Rochester) did. Mr. Fairchild stated that since it had been settled and without mentioning any names or details because he couldn't or wouldn't do that anyway, he would describe the situation. They had a female volunteer who had been very last in training and attendance. She moved out of the district but was allowed to remain on the roster which is the Chief's decision as to who remains on the roster. For an unknown reason, the Chief decided to fire her. She sued for harassment since she was pregnant at the time and the department settled.

Mr. Collins asked if the volunteers get paid per call. Mr. Fairchild stated that they do. We pay to try to get them to show up for the training, we pay for them to attend the meetings and we pay them to show up at the calls. Chair Murphy stated that was not the same in all districts. Mr. Sims stated that these bodies are not volunteers the way Lions' Club members are volunteers and that they were governmental bodies that may or may not pay the members involved. Chair Murphy stated that in some districts, the Chief gets a stipend but no one else does. Mr. Taft stated that in Williamsville they just started a stipend program last year. They get points for the calls they attended, meetings, and training. If they go to extra training outside of our normal training, they get extra points. Twice a year they divide up the pot based on the number of points they have and they get a check right before Christmas and the end of the fiscal year. Last year, the median stipend was something like \$535. That basically pays for their gas to go back and forth to the calls and meetings. And the trustees don't get paid in Williamsville because they did not think it was right for them to get paid to go sit in a conference room one night a month when the people going out all the time were not getting paid. Mr. Collins confirmed that they do not get any kind of salary. Mr. Taft stated that no, but they do get invited to the Christmas party.

Mr. Plunk stated that he would like to go back to the required training for fire trustees and offered another perspective by stating that in addition to fire protection districts, we have school districts. School board members are not required to have training before they are elected to the school board, nor are they really required to have training after they are elected but many of them do. We have townships and trustees for the townships and they are elected. We have villages and as far as he knows there is no required training for them so it's not unusual to not require training for local officials. Mr. Sims stated that for those that are elected, they advertise during the election what their skills are and educational background and the voters can make a decision. For the township assessors, not only do you have to be trained, you have to pass a test. Chair Murphy stated that the School Board Association has training for anyone who is running for school board prior to the election. Every two years there is training out there before you are elected. It's a one day class and you learn a lot about school finances. It's not mandatory but it's a good thing for people to attend before the election. Mr. Sims commented that he is not aware of any position that requires training that does not pay the individuals to be on that board or in that position. It is his belief that this what makes it so difficult with the fire trustees' boards. First, they can't get too heavy with the volunteers because you have to have them. Trustees are sort of upper level management with oversight, but it's difficult because of the nature of the beast.

Mr. Plunk stated that he was encouraged that they (Taft and Fairchild) were willing to come to the meeting and he hopes they will feel comfortable attending future meetings. He reminded everyone here that this Commission is only in existence through April, and after the November election and those efforts we have related to the referendums on the ballot, he was not sure what



his emphasis was going to be beyond putting together a final report. He doesn't know if there are any other recommendations that they would be pursuing after November.

Chair Murphy stated that he had shared in the past that Chairman Van Meter has ever intent of keeping this going and he wasn't sure there would need to be another election. He feels that for things that may come up in the future, there is a need for a group like the CEC, a "watchdog" group like this. Mr. Plunk stated that he sees one of the benefits of this (the CEC) is that groups like yours (referring to the Sangamon County Fire District Trustees Association) have started meeting and talking and he wishes them the very best, hopes they grow and have great representation. But since the Regional Leadership Council was created in 2013, it had a lot of initial interest but has dropped off a lot. He thinks that this group (the CEC) was instrumental in the townships association being revitalized. Chair Murphy stated that if for no other reason, the CEC needs to stay in existence because otherwise these groups will go away. Mr. Sims stated that should it extend beyond, that the most important thing in the CEC reports was not the recommendations, it was the material in the back of that report that set a structure on how things should be accomplished so you didn't have to come back every couple of years and make a whole set of new recommendations. We were asked by the previous chair to put together a strategy for this to move operationally forward. There are only two items that dealt with that strategy at all. One was developing legislative linkages and creating a business leaders network, and that wasn't the Chamber. We found that these kinds of operations are not successful unless business leaders supported it. So, where's the outreach to business leaders? I suggest to you and whoever is on it, that you should look to the back of the report because that's where the Regional Leadership Council is, and training people, and looking for performance measures and how you go forward to help people do things. That has been entirely lost during this last period. Mr. Plunk stated that this was his point: it does take big effort on the part of the organization itself to keep that interest going. Mr. Taft stated that one of the things he was most proud of in Williamsville is that of the five trustees, three of them have not had any fire experience. It really helps because sometimes we get some probing questions that are hard to answer, but they are good questions because it keeps everyone from wanting to buy the newest and latest toy. Mr. Sudeth stated that was a concern everywhere.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Mike Murphy asked if there were any further comments. There being none, he called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Sudeth motioned to adjourn. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail Weiskopf  
Acting as Recording Secretary